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Communist Party USA and the Peace Movement

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I confess.

As the representative of the Communist Party USA on the June 12 Coalition, I am in a position to say that the House Select Committee on Intelligence and The Wall Street Journal are correct: The Communist Party has played and continues to play an active role in the U.S. peace movement.

President Reagan's absurd charge that the U.S. peace movement is essentially a Soviet front forced the House Select Committee on Intelligence to hold hearings on the matter. The committee issued a report in early December, called "Soviet Active Measures," which, among other things, notes that the Communist Party USA was actively involved in the historic June 12 demonstration. The report concludes that there is no evidence that the Soviet Union manipulated the coalition that organized the action.

This conclusion did not sit well with The Wall Street Journal. Eager to aid Mr. Reagan's effort to generate another Cold War, the paper editorialized that the House report was seriously flawed because it did not recognize how alleged Soviet fronts, such as the Communist Party, "have been successful in shifting attention away from the Soviet Union's massive military buildup and toward the Reagan administration's defense programs."

To prove this charge, the Journal points out that there were no anti-Soviet signs, banners or chants at the June 12 demonstration. True enough. But what is interesting is that there were no rules prohibiting such signs, banners or chants. Organizations were free to use whatever slogans they wanted to. The Journal seems to be saying that the thousands of organizations which marched on June 12 were dupes of the Soviet Union.

But I must confess that I was among those who tried to get the June 12 Coalition to focus its demand on the Reagan administration. I argued at a number of meetings that the military buildup of the administration was bringing the world dangerously close to a nuclear holocaust.

Like others, I based my argument on the fact that the Soviet Union had endorsed

the nuclear freeze, signed SALT II, called for a comprehensive test ban treaty, pledged not to be the first country to use nuclear weapons in a conflict and urged the creation of nuclear free zones in different parts of the world, including Central Europe. I naturally pointed out that the Reagan administration had not endorsed any of these disarmament proposals.

The Wall Street Journal assumes that only communists or those manipulated by Communists would want to focus on the Reagan administration. Actually, the decision of the June 12 Coalition to focus on Mr. Reagan was determined at a two-day meeting at the end of last January. A resolution was adopted by several hundred national organizations which in essence said:

"While it is the responsibility of all governments to end the arms race, as residents of the U.S. it is our responsibility to alter the policies of the Reagan administration." Although this remained the official position of the June 12 Coalition, participating organizations were allowed to project whatever political demands they wanted.

The Wall Street Journal refuses to face the fact that peace activists in this country are scared out of their wits by the policies of their government and are working to change those policies. Rather than deal honestly with this uncomfortable fact, the Journal attributes this sentiment to Communist manipulation and the naivete of U.S. peace activists, who are accused of working unwittingly in the interests of the Soviet Union.

This brings us to another Journal charge: Communists in the peace movement are serving the interests of the Soviet Union.

Again I must confess. My party's peace activities have indeed served the interests of the Soviet people—because their desire for peace is identical to that of the U.S. people. This is a strange charge. Is the Journal suggesting that the Communist Party should be against peace because the Soviet Union is for peace?

Communist Party members are playing important roles in the peace movement. They argue among peace activists that the

Reagan administration, not the Soviet Union, threatens the survival of humanity. And they work in the interests of the Soviet Union by struggling for peace.

Also, communists work to make the peace movement as broad as possible. They try to make sure it reflects the working class, multi-racial and multi-national character of the population. This may not serve the interests of the Reagan administration, but it certainly serves the interests of the U.S. people.

Right now, party members are active in literally hundreds of local peace organizations. The Communist Party USA—like Communist parties around the world—has always been and will continue to be an active fighter in the struggle for peace. We confess.

Mr. Kimmel is on the staff of the Daily World newspaper, where this article originally appeared.